

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 3765

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, GT, BH, VE
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH VILLAGRAN KRAMER

1. GUATEMALAN VICE-PRESIDENT-ELECT, FRANCISCO VILLAGRAN
KRAMER, CALLED ON ME APRIL 19 TO RENEW AN OLD ACQUAINTANCESHIP.
IN THE COURSE OF OUR CONVERSATIONS HE COMMENTED AS FOLLOWS:

2. DOMESTIC: A CRACK IN THE DOOR TOWARD DEMOCRACY IN GUATEMALA HAD
OPENED WITH THIS ELECTION. VILLAGRAN SAID HE HAD GIVEN GREAT THOUGHT
TO IMPROVING THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES
AND HUMAN RIGHTS, AND HE AND PRESIDENT-ELECT LUCAS HAD DISCUSSED
THIS AT LENGTH. ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS THAT HAD TO BE DONE WAS
TO IMPROVE THE COURT SYSTEM TO MAKE THE COURTS TRULY RESPONSIVE TO
PEOPLE'S NEEDS AND AN INSTRUMENT FOR JUSTICE. REFORMS WOULD BE
UNDERTAKEN IN BOTH STRUCTURE (E.G., IMPROVING JUDGES' PAY, ETC.)
AND PROCESSES (E.G., STRENGTHENING LABOR COURTS' POWERS AND
JURISDICTION, ETC.). A SECOND MAJOR AREA WOULD BE THE SECURITY
FORCES, I.E., "CLEANING OUT" THE POLICE AND INSURING DUE PROCESS.
A THIRD AREA WOULD BE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL IMPROVEMENT. MAJOR
IMPROVMENTS WERE NEEDED IN NUTRITION, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH. A
GREATER POLITICAL SENSE IN THE VARIOUS REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY
OF BETTER PARTICIPATION IN THE NATION'S LIFE WAS NEEDED. A MAJOR
PROBLEM, HE SAID, WAS GOING TO BE HOW TO HANDLE THE PARA-MILITARY
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FORCES PRESENTLY CONTROLLED RESPECTIVELY BY MARIO SANDOVAL AND ARANA.
VILLAGRAN WAS IN GENERAL ENTHUSIASTIC AND OPTIMISTIC
REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY FOR PROGRESS TOWARD DEMOCRACY, AND HE
REFLECTED ALL THE EXPECTABLE EUPHORIA OF HAVING JUST WON AN ELECTION.

3. BELIZE: VILLAGRAN SAID THAT HE ENVISAGED A SETTLEMENT OF THE
BELIZE QUESTION ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES: (A) MAKING BELIZE A

PARTNER IN CABEI AND THE COMMON MARKET; (B) AGREEING TO A MINOR "BORDER RECTIFICATION" BUT WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT EXPLOITATION OF MAJOR RESOURCES SUCH AS OIL IN THE AREA WOULD BE BY "JOINT VENTURE" AND THAT GUATEMALA WOULD HAVE ACCESS TO THE SEA; (C) HAVING A SETTLEMENT WITH PRICE AND THE UK APPROVED BY POPULAR REFERENDUM, THUS OVERCOMING THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE; (D) UNDERTAKING DIRECT CONTACTS WITH JAMAICA AND THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES TO OBTAIN THEIR SUPPORT, AND IN GENERAL BRING THEM BACK FROM A "DRIFT TOWARD AFRICA." VILLAGRAN HAS TALKED TO PRESIDENT PEREZ AND FOREIGN MINISTER CONSOLVI ALONG THESE LINES. HE

SAID PEREZ PROMISED TO SUPPORT ANY EFFORT TO ORIENT BELIZE ECONOMICALLY TOWARD CENTRAL AMERICA, INCLUDING EXTENDING TO BELIZE THE SYSTEM OF PETROLEUM LENDING NOW APPLICABLE TO CENTRAL AMERICA. PEREZ ALSO PROMISED TO HELP HIM IN CONTACTS WITH PRIME MINISTER MANLEY. AGAIN, VILLAGRAN WAS OPTIMISTIC AND EAGER.

4. OTHER: VILLAGRAN WAS GUARDED IN COMMENTS ABOUT NICARAGUA. EXCEPT OT INDICATE CONCERN ABOUT THE SITUATION, HE MADE NO CONCRETE OBSERVATIONS. HE SAID HE WANTED TO DEVELOP CLOSE RELATIONS WITH COSTA RICA, SINCE HE KNOWS CARAZO WELL. HE ALSO SAID HE WANTED TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS WITH VENEZUELA (HE AND CONSALVI WERE UN COLLEAGUES). FINALLY, HE SAID HE HAD TALKED TO PANAMA AND HAS SUGGESTED A RENEWAL OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, WHICH HE EXPECTS TO OCCUR SOON.

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5. VILLAGRAN AND HIS WIFE TRAVELED FROM CARACAS TO SPAIN AND ITALY FOR A VACATION. HE PLANS TO RETURN VIA WASHINGTON IN EARLY MAY AND SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO MEET WITH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARIES SHELTON AND MCNEIL.
VAKY

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